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ABSTRACT

The Further Education Unit (FEU) believes that young school leavers should be able to check their achievements against a core of entitlement. Therefore, the FEU is proposing a core curriculum to support the successful transition of the school leaver aged 16 or older to adult life. The core, which is intended to serve as a diagnostic and planning checklist from which individual programs can be constructed, addresses the following areas: adaptability, role transition, physical skills, interpersonal skills; values, communication and numeracy, problem solving, information technology, society, learning skills, health education, creativity, environment, science and technology, and coping. Teachers should incorporate such pupil learning strategies as experiential learning, participation and negotiation, and community involvement into transition programs based on core objectives to encourage pupils to internalize and apply their learning, take responsibility for it, and recognize a variety of experiences as a part of it. Preservice and inservice training that reflect the broadening of the role of teachers to become managers of learning should be provided, and school organization should be reappraised to support the achievement of core aims. Extensive publicity will also be necessary so that practitioners, parents, and industry will accept the new core. (MN)

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Progressing to College: a 14-16 Core

An FEU View

April 1985

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Dear Sir/Madam

PROGRESSING TO COLLEGE: A 14-16 CORE

I enclose a brief statement by the FEU Board of Management, which outlines the nature of a core curriculum that we think could be provided in the final years of secondary school as a basis for planning FE curricula.

Such a core, described as it is by fifteen aims, was part of a longer submission to the DES, jointly produced by officers of the School Curriculum Development Committee and the Further Education Unit. This shorter version, adopted by the FEU, remains faithful to those fifteen aims and even a cursory appraisal of the rationale introducing those aims will reveal that the core is intended to be more than a planning mechanism. It is an entitlement, and has much in common with many of the pronouncements that have been made on the secondary curriculum.

Few of the pronouncements made, however, put a boundary around the core; consequently it becomes a huge shopping list. This temptation is avoided here, no doubt at the price of being labelled prescriptive.

The recent White Paper *Better Schools** describes the kind of curriculum that is desired by the Government. We believe that the fifteen aims contained herewith satisfy the criteria of *Better Schools*, including a useful relationship to TVEI, new technology and the demands of working life. They should also provide an appropriate base for any new structure of vocational qualifications that emerge from the recently announced review.**

Conventional subjects are not the basis of the core although we recognise that single subjects may be a method of delivering the core. The FEU knows from experience, however, that there is more to curriculum delivery than timetables and examinations, and readers will not be surprised to see in this document other suggestions with respect to delivery.

Any delivery however, must be supported organisationally and by a minimum level of resources, including staff development; and the latter paragraphs of this document describe the nature of the support and promotion that is required.

It is hoped that this document will provide not only a basis for discussion but an acceptable foundation for future work that will enable both schools and colleges to be seen to be responding to the pressures on them to produce curricula that are relevant to young people, comprehensible to users, meaningful to teachers and instructive to examiners.

Yours faithfully

Jack Mansell

JACK MANSELL
Chief Officer

* *Better Schools* Cmnd 9469 HMSO March 1985.
** REVIEW OF VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS. (Paragraphs 35-41 White Paper) *Education and Training for Young People* Cmnd 9482 HMSO April 1985.

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I. WHY A CORE?

1. The FEU, in common with many others, believes that young school leavers should be able to check their achievements against a core of entitlement. It follows from this that schools should be expected to deliver such a core and, however modest, it would indicate to parents, employers and colleges, levels of achievement that have priority in the curriculum.

2. Parents will no doubt seek from such a core, an indication of the personal development to which their children should be entitled. Employers and trainers will look for competence in a range of basic skills. Colleges will similarly look for an achievement base that allows them to make realistic assumptions in the design of FE curricula.

3. It is particularly because of the need for the Further Education system to be able to make realistic assumptions with respect to pre-entry achievement of students, that the FEU makes this contribution to the discussion of a 14-16 core. Such a core may provide a basis for rationalisation and accreditation. A greater advantage however, is the opportunity to make central to the curriculum those aspects of learning and development that are recognised as important but are more often than not accorded low priority because they are not associated with conventional examinations.

4. For example, such a core should deliberately support the successful transition of the 16+ school leaver to adult life. It should be as much a basis for counselling and guidance in life skills as for choosing academic and/or vocational subjects.

II. THE NATURE OF THE CORE

5. The core should be 'compulsory' for all 14-16 pupils, otherwise it is unlikely to be used and referred to by either educational institutions, examining boards or employers. The way it is provided, applied and made available to individual pupils should be a matter of negotiation and consultation between teachers, parents and the pupils themselves. Although this appears radical, in practice many core subjects such as

mathematics, English, etc., are already agreed in this way. The only differences, as will be described below, are that we are suggesting a core broader than a collection of single subjects.

6. Such a core should occupy a majority of the time available, we suggest about 60%; and this has much in common with the suggestions made by HMI and others.

7. The core should not be regarded as a syllabus to be worked through from start to finish uniformly with all pupils, but a diagnostic and planning check-list, from which individual programmes can be constructed. Such a check-list should be regarded as dynamic and not static. This means keeping it under review in the light of changing and diverse needs.

8. We would expect some form of pupil profile to be associated with the wide range of assessments that would be necessary with the core.

III. THE CORE OUTLINE

9. There is no lack of suggestions as to what should go into a core curriculum, but none of them describe boundaries, and consequently we are faced with an impossibly large 'shopping list'. This is the nub of the discussion. From our analysis of the various claims (available separately or appended) we have restricted the core to fifteen aims.

10. We have used aims rather than conventional subjects to describe the outline of the core. We regard subjects as simply one (not always satisfactory) way of organising and delivering a core. Thus we have avoided reference to religious education and other 'subjects' that may be classified as compulsory by Government policy. Where necessary such subjects can be subsumed within the aims quoted below, and their specific 'content' can be included within specific objectives.

11. At this stage we suggest only core aims. The general acceptance of these would leave the way open for the formulation of more specific objectives describing the desirable content, skills and experiences to be associated with each aim. Where

appropriate, the work of the Assessment of Performance Unit at 13+ and 15+ could be used to establish realistic indicators of performance that may perhaps form part of a record of achievement (profile).

12. Given a reasonable measure of agreement with the fifteen aims, the FEU and SCDC would be willing to develop and pilot the specific objectives and appropriate guidance.

IV. THE CORE AIMS

13. The list below is not meant to indicate rank order. The concept of a compulsory core implies equal status of essentiality for all its components.

(ADAPTABILITY)

i) To develop a flexibility of attitude and ability to learn sufficient to cope with future changes in technology, career and life-style.

(ROLE TRANSITION)

ii) To bring about an informed perspective as to the roles and status of a young person in an adult, multicultural society including the world of work in order to inform responsible and realistic decision-making as to future opportunities.

(PHYSICAL SKILLS)

iii) To enable an appropriate development of physical and manipulative skills in both vocational and leisure contexts, and an appreciation of these skills in others.

(INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

iv) To bring about an ability to be sensitive to and tolerant of the needs of others, and to develop satisfactory personal relationships.

(VALUES)

v) To foster a reasoned set of social and moral values applicable to issues in contemporary society.

(COMMUNICATION/NUMERACY)

vi) To develop levels of achievement in language, communication and numeracy skills to meet the basic demands of contemporary society and to provide a foundation appropriate to the acquisition of further skills.

(PROBLEM SOLVING)

vii) To develop a capacity to approach various kinds of problems methodically and effectively, to undertake courses of action, evaluate them and modify these actions accordingly.

(INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY)

viii) To provide an introduction to the implications and applications of information technology to society, the individual and to the processes of learning.

(SOCIETY)

ix) To provide young people with a knowledge of the workings of modern society, and to develop abilities both to cope with it and to contribute to its development.

(LEARNING SKILLS)

x) To develop sufficient competence and confidence in a variety of independent learning skills to maximise individual potential in work and leisure.

(HEALTH EDUCATION)

xi) To develop an understanding of health and human development sufficent for young people to choose how they can maintain a healthy life style.

(CREATIVITY)

xii) To enable young people to become aware of their own creativity; to develop this and their powers of appreciation and critical judgement for vocational and leisure purposes.

(ENVIRONMENT)

xiii) To foster an appreciation of the physical and technological environment and its relationship with social and scientific issues and principles.

(SCIENCE/TECHNOLOGY)

xiv) To promote an understanding of the nature and discipline of science, and its relationships to technology via the processes of design and production.

(COPING)

xv) To develop the necessary skills for coping with everyday situations together with the ability to collaborate with others and to contribute to their well-being.

V. DELIVERING THE CORE

14. Much has been written by the FEU and others with respect to how LEAs, schools and teachers provide, organise and teach core curricula. Experience within the school and college system suggests a basic set of strategies and we describe below some of these:

a) The core deliberately supports the successful transition of the school leaver to adult life. Thus it will be seen, superficially at least, to be similar in many respects to the 17+ CPVE core[1]. The knowledge, experience, skills and attitudes are generic rather than vocationally specific. Some deliberate overlap in terms of aims and objectives is also desirable, for continuity and reinforcement, but unnecessary duplication is not intended. Some objectives may justifiably appear in both a 14-16 and 17+ core, provided that attention is paid to the contexts and degree of competence appropriate to the age, abilities and experiences of the target groups. For example, the range of applications of the same basic arithmetic skills should be sufficiently different at 15+ and 17+, to allow the same objectives to exist in both cores. Similarly, a case may be made for offering identical aims and objectives at 15+ and 17+

- using different contexts (objectives related to describing the nature of employment may be more specifically focused post- than pre-16),
- in order to develop competency within those objectives (for example, those related to problem solving);

- to encourage increased depth of conceptual understanding (of, for example, scientific or moral issues).

b) An interpretation of core aims which ensures the development of knowledge, experience, skills and affective qualities. It is sometimes argued that such a comprehensive view of competences is incompatible with subject-based delivery, but the work of Cockcroft[2] and the Secondary Science Curriculum Review[3] illustrate that some subject developments themselves are stresing process as well as product outcomes, which could lead to their overt contribution to a common core. The Schools Council Geography 16-19 project shows how geography teaching can contribute to common core aims. More recently, in its advice on national criteria for classical subjects[4] the DES has proposed that:
   - "abstracting, observing and analysing information;
   - paying regard to evidence;
   - developing a sympathetic awareness of others' motives and attitudes";
   - should be regarded as "essential tools for the classical student".

   Quite obviously these skills and abilities are not unique to classical subjects.

c) The expression of aims in terms of objectives gives practical curriculum guidance to teachers, relating to outcomes such as described in (a) above. It also puts on to the teacher responsibility for designing and organising relevant learning experiences to achieve these objectives. Finally, used as a check-list, the objectives facilitate the development of assessment to suit individual needs.

d) The incorporation of pupil learning strategies such as experiential learning, participation/negotiation and community involvement encourages pupils to internalise and apply their learning, take responsibility for it, and recognise a variety of experiences as part of it. This carries with it a change in teachers' role to become not so much knowledge providers but facilitators of

learning and reflectors of the pupils' processes of decision making.

e) Learning, however, does relate to the efficient use of knowledge. The acquisition of knowledge cannot therefore be disregarded as a major learning strategy. With the advent of information technology, teachers must be encouraged to reappraise the ways in which they can encourage pupils to develop their capacity for independent learning. It is interesting to note the teaching strategies, recommended for the implementation of CPVE. These include:

- using counselling and guidance to support young people in developing the confidence to participate in learning experiences offered and to derive maximum benefit from them and subsequent opportunities;
- using strategies based on an integrated curriculum with shared aims to help young people develop skills and concepts, practise them in a number of situations, and recognise their applicability to a range of other contexts.

The teaching methods and techniques required to implement these strategies are well known to teachers. With a firm idea of the nature of the curriculum, teachers will select appropriate methods, but it follows from the above that a suitable mix of formal and informal methods, involving classroom-based activities, group and individual assignments, will be required.

f) Methods of assessment appropriate to the aims and objectives recommended. Many of the core aims described in paragraph 13 are concerned with qualities which are difficult to measure by conventional means, but which must be reflected in methods of assessment if they are to achieve status in the eyes of teachers, employers and - not least - students. The Hargreaves report[5] for ILEA lists four aspects of achievement within the reach of young people to mark their completion of compulsory schooling and facilitate progress into the next stage of their life, whatever that may be:

- the capacity to remember and use facts, mainly expressed in written form;
- the application of knowledge via problem solving and investigational skills;
- the ability to co-operate and communicate with others or use initiatives and self-reliance as appropriate;
- motivation and commitment, self-confidence and perseverance.

If current examinations reflect this range of achievements, there is no reason against including them in the assessment of any 14-16 common core. If they do not, alternative and complementary assessment systems will have to be found. The DES have proposed[6] new methods of recording assessment which, as with our core proposals, apply to all pupils for all aspects of their development.

Such assessments are essential not just summatively for "recognition of achievement", important as that is for progression, but also formatively, to encourage "motivation and personal development". In order to serve both purposes, they need to be cumulatively recorded in a profiling system which is designed "within a framework of national policy which leaves scope for local variations".

g) Pre-service and in-service training which reflect the broadening of the role of teachers to become 'managers of learning'. The involvement (via the participative process of profile compilation) with the 'whole' student and the adjustment to a core curriculum implemented by way of themes and strategies implies for teachers trained as subject specialists a radical reappraisal of professional roles, a reappraisal which must be supported and encouraged by extensive staff development provision.

h) A reappraisal of school organisation in order to support the achievement of core aims.

This may include the development of cross-subject teaching teams which itself involves: a review of teacher responsibility and career development, a reconsideration of timetable structures, increased

liaison with outside agencies; a reallocation of technical; clerical or resource support.

VI. PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING THE CORE

15. Extensive publicity will be required if industry, parents and Further and Higher Education among others are to accept new curriculum design and systems of accreditation. As we describe in foregoing paragraphs, there is a considerable weight of historical and current opinion in favour of a core. The Secretary of State has indicated a need for change in the secondary curriculum and there are widespread, if diverse, feelings amongst providers and consumers of education alike, that rationalisation is overdue. The Department of Education and Science and its counterparts will need to promote and give firm guidance to the system via LEAs, including a timetable for developments, on the framework for any new system of 14-16 provision. This will need to be backed up by Government endorsement, support from Her Majesty's Inspectorate, the School Curriculum Development Committee, the Further Education Unit and Secondary Examinations Council among others, resources for development, piloting and 'changeover' costs and, perhaps most importantly, information to pupils, parents, educational institutions and employers.

FEU
April 1985

Footnotes

[1] The Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (Part A) JBPVE, January 1985.

[2] Mathematics Counts HMSO, 1982.

[3] Science Education 11-16 : proposals for action and consultation SSCR, 1983.

[4] GCSE - draft national criteria for classical subjects DES, 17 July 1984.
(GCSE National Criteria HMSO, 1985 : now available).

[5] Improving Secondary Schools ILEA, 1984.

[6] Records of Achievement - A Statement of Policy DES, 1984.

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The objects for which ***The Further Education Unit (FEU)*** *is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:*
a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvement can be effected;
c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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